

## Andrew Jackson to Henry Dearborn, March 17, 1807, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

### TO HENRY DEARBORN.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This draft exists partly in Jackson's handwriting and partly in the handwriting of a clerk, probably Thomas Searcy. It has many alterations. It may be a rough draft for the letter, dated Mar. 17, 1807. It is reproduced here because it contains some statements not found in the other draft.

Hermitage, [March 17, 1807 (?)]

*Sir.* Having from a love of country and Principles of duty smothered the indignation excited by your letter of the 19th. ultimo untill I could, bring into effect "every exertion in (my) power as a general of the militia to counteract, and render abortive," any plans in operation hostile to the interest of the union or the peace and harmony of our common country. This I have and ever will do, but not in the yankee stile of base duplicity, by smiling in the face of an enemy and plunging a dagger to his [heart] not by decending from the charector of a general and acting in the capacity of a base spy and disimulator, as recommended by you, which might well comport with the charector of a captain of a smuggling Boat, but ill comports with that dignified sentiments, that ought to prevade the mind of a Secratory of War, to a great and rising republick, whose principle pillers, is virtue candeur and truth. you say "it is industriou[s]ly reported amonghst the adventurers, that they are to be joined at the mouth of cumberland by two regiments under the command of Genl Jackson. Such a story migh[t] afford (me) an opportunity of giving an effectual check to the enterprise if not too late." Such a sentence uttered by an officer of government, that he is not possessed of talents and abilities to fullfill the duties of his station, and if deliberately expressed, shews

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that he is too devoid of principle to be a prop to a rising republick, what Sir, to recommend a genl to descend from his command of a Division to that of a spie and deceiptfull assassin. These are well noted by me, and laid up, in due time for your explanation, and account, but as you have stated reports of the adventurers you will permit me to name another that you in your official capacity is to aid the thing by giving orders as Secratory of War to march troops etc. etc. I have said by the adventurers, supposing that Aron Burr, and Genl Wilkison are amongst that number. from such a story as this Sir you if you had attended to your duty from the information, which is stated by Doctor Dixson (to me) to have been filed in your office on or before the 15th. ultimo had you named the adventurers and given authority to seize and apprehend them with their adherents might have put an effectual check to the plan. But in doing this you might have underwent the unpleasant sensations of denouncing your friend Wilkison, who you so effectual aided by your duplicity and cunning to send Colo. Butler out of the army and out of existance to open the channel for free and uncontrolled conspiracy and treason in the army, and to set a precedent, whenever your Genl became base enough to exercise the power that he might at the head of his army endanger the existance of our government. for it was well known that the virtue and firmness of Butler was such that no conspiracy against our country ever could take place in the army whilst he remained second in command. but I see the bitter dregs of private spleen against me in your letter. I see that mean duplicity and yanky cunning, that always accompanies base minds. It is understood here that you were whilst Wilkison was at the city a mere satalight to him, it is also reported, that whilst Colo. Burr was at the city you and him were intimate and friendly. This might have been the case without any criminal views or intentions or even knowledge of criminal views, and if reports are to be attended to, you yourself if Colo. Burr is to be believed, if he is a man of truth, and honor, and engaged in any hostile views against the union or its peace and harmony, he has stated that your orders would always be produced, to authorise his movements. this I have from the mouth of a respectable citizens. my own ears can Testify, the same, and this too when charged with my suspicions, of being engaged in the enterprise of seperating the union and your beloved genl, at the head of the army to carry this into

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effect. You as a military character stand bound to me, either to explain or give satisfaction. this you must calculate on. No Robes of power shall screen an individual from that Just resentment and punishment that such insults merit. I wonder not, that your Government is falling to peaces, when every supporter of republican principle, the laws of the country and the peace of the union is thus insulted, and assailed. who is [it] Sir that has saved Neworleans from destruction and devastation, if it is saved. read Governor claborns letter a coopy of which is enclosed will mature your Judgt. You cannot ascribe it to any exertion of Government, when you had the proofs on the 15th. and was afraid to announce on the 19th. the names of the adventurers, but wished to throw the responsability that government ought to have taken upon their own shoulders upon that of an individual. you knew if you knew anything, that I was prepared to act and that efficiently, that my letter to the member of congress had disclosed my suspicions, and that even those suspicions reached your department, but notwithstanding the reports, the[y] were not sufficient to convince a virtuous mind, without further proof that you were a traitor. I therefore spared the heads of departments from my suspicions [???] I enclose a coopy of this letter to the president to be informed, whether such a letter as yours of the 19th. ult, was written by his knowledge, and to be informed whether those that are exerting all their abilities in favour of the government, are by a side glance and yanky trick, denounced as suspicious of being aiding in the treason and that too under the sacred robe of official office. but your god James Wilkison is suspected. my letter to governor Claiborne may have lead to a discovery of the treason, and this is sufficient for his satilite, to attempt to wound the feelings of a patriot who is above suspicion. but I possess virtue enough to do my duty, and never to abandon my country for the side wind blasts of a satilite of base and corrupt men who I have been instrumental in detecting.

[ *Supplement to above letter.* ]

I also find from a Knoxville print of January the third, that you have communicated, to the Governor that "it has been represented at Pittsburgh, by those supposed to be engaged in the enterprise, that two regiments of Tennessee citizens would Join the expedition

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at the mouth of Cumberland river.” *How informed* and do you Sir take the information of men that you call, “*disappointed, unprincipled, ambitious or misguided individuals,*” for testimony to slander a community and insult individuals. What, Suppose I was to take this basis, for Testimony against yourself—is Colo. Burr to be believed, if he is, then he says, he has your orders for any enterprise, he has in view. This is susceptible of proof, from respectable authority, but still Sir, I spared you from my suspicions, until I have seen your letter, been advised, of the time formal proof was lodged against Colo. Burr in your office, and your modesty on the 19th. of Decbr, could not, tho' your country was in danger, induce you to name him, but you can name mine Sir on a mere story. What does this prove that you must be acquainted with his plans or views, or that he is united with your intimate friend the Genl, who you so eminently aided, in putting Colo. Thomas Butler out of service and out of existence, to open a door to conspiracy, and that the Genl might act without control, for you well knew from the virtue and firmness of the Colo, that Wilkison if so minded never could renew his former Spanish conspiracy so long as the Colo. was second in command. Yes Genl, it was the part I took in behalf [of] the virtuous and persecuted, Butler that has raised your enmity against me, and you wish to seek revenge in the cold, Base stile of insinuation, of stories under your official robes, that may be taken hold of by my enemies to create suspicion that I am enemy to my country, this will not do, my country does know I never see it in danger but I am ready to step forward in its behalf, I never am suspicious of its being in danger, but I notify the proper organs thereof and put them on their guard, not through you, for your duplicity, in the case of Colo. Butler was sufficient evidence that you were not to be trusted, your expressions to a member of Congress relative to me, and behind my back brought me to a determination to have no intercourse with you unless my duty as a military man required, and now only, such correspondence, as the insinuations in your letter, and this my answer may lead to. you are a military man and can take a hint, and as it appears that hostilities may be the Issue I will meet you at any point, to receive your instructions. Colo. B. received at my house all that hospitality that a banished patriot, from his home was entitled to. I then thought him a patriot in exile for a cause that every man of honour must regret, the violence with which he was persued

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all his language to me carried with it a love of country, and obedience to the laws and your orders. under these declarations and after [acquittal] by a respectable grand Jury of Kentuckey, my suspicions of him vanished, and I did furnish him with two boats, and had he wanted ten more on the same terms and under the same impressions I then had he should have had them. You are but little acquainted with the people of Tennessee or myself (tho you ought from the patriotic tender I had made) if you think, that Colo. Burr or even yourself could influence two men to unite in endeavouring a seperation of the union. But Sir what is this conduct of your[s] calculated to inspire in the mind, of those, who has been uniformly in the support of the present administration and republican principles—that you to aid some secret plan, wishes to fill them with disgust, under which, they may abandon their country, but we possess too much virtue and patriotism ever to abandon our constitution. But Sir when prooff shews him to be a triator, I would cut his throat, with as much pleasure as I would cut yours on equal testimony.